

Biblical Repentance

by David J. Stewart | May 2001 | Updated June 2016

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE" (2nd Peter 3:9).

There is much debate and confusion in churches today over what it means to “repent.” If you say that believing is all that is required to be saved, then you’ll be accused of preaching “easy believism.” If you teach that repentance is required for salvation, then you’ll be accused of “adding works” to faith for salvation. Neither of these teachings is correct. The truth is that you are not saved by repenting, you are saved by your faith in Jesus Christ!



Satan blinds people from seeing the Gospel. 2nd Corinthians 4:4, “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” The Gospel is the light, the truth, by which men are saved if they BELIEVE. Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Repentance is Toward God from Unbelief

Our text passage of Scripture teaches that God wants everyone to “repent.” The word “repent” concerning salvation in the Holy Bible comes from the Greek word, *metanoia*, which is a noun meaning “a *change of mind*.” The verb form of the word is *metanoeo*, which means, “to think differently.” It is important to know that the modern English dictionary provides a completely different meaning of the word “repent.” The English dictionary defines repent as “turning away from sin; sorrow for sin and a desire to reform.” But this is not the Biblical Greek meaning of the word “repent.” Repentance is *a change of mind*. Since the Greek meaning of the word “repent” does not tell us what to change our mind about, supplemental information is required. That is, additional information is needed. The Bible tells us the answer in Acts 20:21b, “*repentance toward God.*” Repentance is toward God.

Certainly, to repent toward God involves turning from something. You cannot face north without turning your back to the south. For some people it means turning to God from intellectualism that had blinded them from the truth of the Gospel. For others it means turning to God from their sinful ways that had hindered them from coming to the light to be saved. For some it may be turning from wealth, or bitterness against God, or false religion, that had hindered them from seeing the glorious light of the Gospel (2nd Corinthians 4:4). But the meaning of repentance is to change one’s mind, and not the act of forsaking anything. Repentance is thinking differently toward God from whatever it was that hindered you from being saved in the first place. The emphasis is upon believing the Gospel, not upon forsaking anything. Please read, [The Great Meaning Of Metanoia](#).

Although repentance is definitely necessary for salvation, it doesn’t mean what

most people think it means. Repentance and faith are like two sides of one coin— You cannot flip a coin over without turning both sides at the same time. Likewise, a man who believes has also repented. A man who turns to God by faith from his idols has repented from his unbelief. We are saved by believing the Gospel. You cannot believe on the Lord Jesus Christ without repenting from whatever was hindering you from coming to the light. But we are saved by believing, not by forsaking anything. If a person didn't repent (i.e., change their mind), they would never come to God at all.

We are all guilty sinners, under the condemnation of God's Law, justly deserving of being punished in Hellfire forever. **Romans 3:19**, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become GUILTY before God.” I thank God the Father for sending His only begotten Son into the world to pay my debt of sin. Jesus paid for our sins with His own literal blood (Hebrews 9:12, 24; 12:24; 1st Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 1:5).

In Dr. Jack Hyle's excellent book titled, “Enemies of Soulwinning,” he correctly states:



So, from what must a person repent in order to be saved? He must repent of that which makes him lost. Since "believing not" makes him lost, "believing" makes him saved. In repentance there is a turning from the thing that keeps him from being saved to the thing that saves him. So, yes, there is a repentance from unbelief in order to believe. It is simply a change of direction. It means a turning around. You are going away from believing, and you decide to turn around and believe. You change your direction; you change your mind. With your will you believe and rely upon Christ to save you. In order to believe, you have to repent of unbelief. That which makes a man lost must be corrected.

SOURCE: Dr. Jack Hyles, a quote from chapter 4, titled “[Misunderstood Repentance—An Enemy Of Soul Winning](#),” from the classic book titled, ENEMIES OF SOUL WINNING!

Pastor Danny Castle correctly says:

“You are not saved by repenting, you are saved by your faith in Jesus Christ.”

SOURCE: Pastor Danny Castle, a quote from the 2016 sermon titled, “[Acting Responsibly](#).”

Dr. Jack Hyles 100% correctly and Biblically states concerning repentance...

**“Repentance is not some little silly, 'I'm sorry.'
Repentance is not simply a fear of God. Repentance is not a monk fasting and afflicting his body in a monastery.
Repentance is not remorse because of sin's**

consequences. Repentance is not penance performed before the pope as you kiss his toe... Repentance is not being sorry for what I've done wrong. It is not confessing one's sins to a priest. It is not just conviction of sin. It is not the signing of a pledge of abstinence. Repentance is that thing when you come before God and see yourself as you are, and see Him as he is, and say with Isaiah 'Woe is me, for I am unclean!'" —Pastor Jack Hyles (1926-2001), a quote from the timeless MP3 sermon, [THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH TO REPENTANCE!](#)

Amen and amen!

God's law is a measuring stick, which shows us that WE CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES because of our ungodly condition, and then the law BRINGS US to Christ. Galatians 3:24-26, "**Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**" The whole notion that a person has to experience a profound regret for sin, and a consuming desire to depart from sin, and intent to reform, have NOTHING to do with Biblical repentance unto salvation. Repentance is turning to Jesus by faith because you realize that you are a guilty sinner incapable of saving yourself and you rest totally in the death of Christ upon the cross, His burial and His resurrection from the dead three days later. That's the Gospel!

My friend, you are lost because you are a sinner! Jesus Christ came into the world to pay your sin debt and mine. No religion can save you! Unless you by faith accept Christ's payment for your sins, you will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. Christ died upon the cross for our sins, He was buried, and He bodily raised up from the dead three days later (this is called "the Gospel"). We are saved by acknowledging that we are an unholy sinner in the eyes of a holy God, and we receive the Gospel by faith as full payment for our sins. When you turn to Jesus as the Christ to be saved, you have turned your back against sin, otherwise you never would have come to Christ to be saved. John 3:20, "**For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**"

You need God's righteousness to enter Heaven, which is solely through faith in Jesus as the risen Christ. The Lord took our sins upon Himself on Calvary's cross, and by faith God places His righteousness upon us (2nd Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:5-6). This beautiful Bible doctrine is called [IMPUTATION](#). What an awesome Savior!

Dr. M.R. DeHaan gives the following excellent explanation between salvation verses service . . .

"There is a vast difference between coming to Jesus for salvation and coming after Jesus for service. Coming to Christ makes one a believer, while coming after Christ makes one a disciple. All believers are not disciples. To become a believer one accepts the invitation of the Gospel, to be a disciple one obeys the challenge to a life of dedicated service and separation. Salvation comes through the sacrifice of Christ; discipleship comes only by sacrifice of self and surrender to His call for devoted service. Salvation is free, but discipleship involves paying

the price of a separated walk. Salvation can't be lost because it depends upon God's faithfulness, but discipleship can be lost because it depends upon our faithfulness." DeHaan, M. R. Hebrews. Zondervan Publishing House, 1959 (p. 117).

Pastor Hal Lindsey provides the following helpful words:

"There are those who, in their zeal to get people to turn from their sinful ways and receive the Lord, almost put repentance on a par with believing... Repentance, as it relates to Christ, means to change our minds about Him, who He is and what He's done to provide forgiveness and deliverance from our sins. When we place faith in Jesus as having taken our place personally on the cross and borne the penalty due our sins, then we're automatically repenting, because we couldn't accept Him in this way without having had to change our minds in some way concerning Him." Lindsey, Hal. The Liberation of Planet Earth. Zondervan Publishing House, 1974 (p. 136, 137).

Here are two more excellent quotes by Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges, differentiating between salvation verses discipleship:

"It is an inexcusable error to confront sinners with problems that concern the Christian life and call upon them to make promises regarding them. An unsaved person is never called upon to surrender himself to God. The saving act is in no instance represented as our 'giving ourselves to God'; it is, on the contrary, taking His Son as our Savior." Ryrie, Charles. Balancing the Christian Life. Moody Press, Inc., 1969 (p. 170).

"Eternal life is free. Discipleship is immeasurably hard. The former is attained by faith alone, the latter by a faith that works... the former brings with it the righteousness of God so that a man is 'justified freely by his grace' (Romans 3:24). The latter develops a personal righteousness, based on good deeds, so that a man was also 'justified by works' (James 2:24). The former constituted the believer God's workmanship, the latter fulfilled the wonderful purpose for which he had been created. The former cost man nothing, the latter could cost him everything, including life itself." Hodges, Zane C. The Hungry Inherit. Moody Press, Inc., 1972 (p. 114, 115).

Those are some excellent quotes, doing a good job of showing why Lordship Salvation is a heresy. Any one who teaches that salvation is not easy; but also that say—you must forsake all, cease from sinful bad habits, commit your life to follow Jesus and confess Him before men—They have corrupted the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus (2nd Corinthians 11:3-4). They are teaching a false plan of salvation, which does not produce the new birth. We are saved by faith alone in Christ's death on the cross for our sins, His burial and bodily resurrection (1st Corinthians

15:1-4).

I am not saved by any human effort or self-righteousness of my own; but rather, I am saved by completely resting in Christ because of what He did to pay for my sins on the cross. Jesus promises to save anyone who comes to Him for forgiveness (John 6:37). Believe and the work is done! **Acts 20:21** speaks of “*repentance TOWARD GOD.*” The Word of God NEVER teaches repentance FROM sin to be saved; BUT, rather, repentance TOWARD GOD. Repentance is a *change of mind*, a change of mind from what you want to do to get to Heaven to what God says you must do to get to Heaven—concerning sin and the Savior. Childlike faith is all that is required for salvation. If a person knows they are a guilty sinner, bound for Hellfire, and turns in faith to Jesus Christ to forgive their sins and save them--that person has repented.

THE PREACHING THAT PRODUCES REPENTANCE (Dr. Ironside; awesome stuff on real repentance!)

Repentance Towards God

You can put all the faith in Christ you want, it means nothing if you're in denial about your sins... “**If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us**” (1st John 1:10). The entire matter of salvation deals with OUR SINS. Thus, repentance is when we come to the realization that we have sinned AGAINST GOD. Notice what Joseph said to Potiphar's wicked, adulterous wife who tried to seduce him in Genesis 39:9, “**There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin AGAINST GOD?**”

[Dr. Harry Ironside](#) (1876-1951) is 100% correct on repentance. He says in his gospel tract, ***ANOTHER GOSPEL?***:

“When anyone comes promising salvation to those 'who make full surrender' of all that they have to God, and who 'pay the price of full salvation' he is preaching another gospel, for the price was paid on Calvary's cross and the work that saves is finished. It was Christ Jesus who made the full surrender when He yielded His life on Calvary that saves us, not our surrender in any way to Him.”

SOURCE: Harry A. Ironside, from the Gospel tract, [*Another Gospel*](#).

Dr. Ironside is Biblically correct!

Joseph realized that if he did commit adultery, he would be sinning AGAINST GOD! In Luke 15:21, the repentant prodigal son said, “**Father, I have sinned AGAINST HEAVEN, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.**” Notice what king David said in Psalm 41:4, “**LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned AGAINST THEE.**” Notice what the Apostle Paul taught in Acts

20:21, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, lost sinners need to repent TOWARDS GOD. Carefully notice in Mark 1:15 what Jesus said... "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Notice that Jesus DIDN'T say "repent ye, and forsake your sins." No, rather, He said, "repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Repentance is changing your mind about whatever is keeping you from coming to Jesus to be saved, which the Bible says is the love of sin in John 3:20. John 8:12 says that Jesus is the light. Folks who love their sins WON'T come to Jesus to be saved because they don't want to be proven wrong in their sins. But when a man sees the our God, and admits that he is an unholy sinner, condemned under God's holy law, only then that man comes to Christ to be saved (Galatians 3:24-26).

[Why So Many Preachers Are Being Misled Concerning Repentance Unto Salvation](#) (the purpose of God's law)

The Sin-Question and the Son-question

Tragically, few people today have genuinely repented. Many people today falsely claim to be "Christian," but they are not. They have never repented concerning their sins. Please note that I said "concerning their sins," and not "from their sins." There is a big difference. Salvation involves BOTH the sin-question and the Son-question:

1. **THE SIN QUESTION.** If a person does not see their need, then why would he or she need a Savior? To be saved, the sin-question must be dealt with. We are all sinners (Romans 3:23), guilty before God (Romans 3:19), and justly deserving of eternal punishment (Romans 6:23). 1st John 1:10 states that we are calling God a LIAR if we deny that we have sinned. Many people today falsely think they are going to Heaven because they "committed their life to Christ," or "made a decision for Christ." There can be [NO salvation without the Law of God.](#)

Many unrepentant people today, who are proud and self-righteous, "think" they are saved simply because they "gave their life to Jesus." This is the nonsense being taught in Charismatic circles today, and by their televangelists. Judas gave his life to Jesus and went to Hell. The Pharisees gave their lives to God, and went to Hell. You'd better get BORN-AGAIN! We are saved through Jesus' blood, that takes our sins away. The great evangelist Charles Finney said...

"The severity of the Law should be unsparingly applied to the conscience until the sinner's self-righteousness is annihilated, and he stands speechless and condemned before the Holy God."

Too many preachers today explain the CURE without the GUILT of sin. We don't hear much today about the GUILT of sin. What we do hear a lot about is the CURE. Televangelists utterly fail to preach against America's sins. All we hear is how someone was on the brink of bankruptcy, but then sent in their last \$20 to *The 700 Club*, and now their life is a bed of roses. 2nd Peter 2:3 describes these greedy impostaers in exact Words... "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation

slumbereth not." Woe unto America's televangelists!!!

2. **THE SON QUESTION.** It is not enough to merely decide to turn over a new leaf to be saved. One cannot admit his or her sinful condition, and then attempt to reform the sinful flesh, expecting to be saved. Only Jesus has the nail-scared hands and feet, and we can only be saved through Christ. Roman Catholics readily admit their sinfulness, but foolishly trust the Catholic Church to save them, instead of relying on Jesus Christ alone as the Word of God teaches (John 14:6). There can be NO salvation apart from the name of JESUS (Acts 4:10-12).

Thus, repentance is a *change of mind*, i.e. turning by faith to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, because of the acknowledgment of one's sinful condition. It's that simple. It is the blood of Jesus that washes our sins away; not water baptism, not church membership, not turning over a new leaf, not surrendering one's life to God, not forsaking one's sins, not making Jesus Lord, et cetera. We are sinners, and Jesus is the Savior! To go to Heaven, our sins must be washed away by Jesus' blood, and all we have to do is BELIEVE upon the Lord as our Savior. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and only He has the nail-scared hands and feet. Thus, only through Christ's sacrifice for our sins can we receive eternal life.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH (you don't repent first, and then have faith. They are inseparable!)

Except Ye Repent, Ye Shall All Likewise Perish!

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, **EXCEPT YE REPENT, ye shall all likewise perish.** Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, **EXCEPT YE REPENT, ye shall all likewise perish**" (Luke 13:1-5).

Some people had brought bad news to Jesus, about the tragic deaths of others. We experience these same types of reports almost daily in modern times. In fact, there's not a day that passes that we don't hear from the newsmedia about the tragic deaths of so many people. Death is often sudden, and without warning. This is what Jesus meant when He warned... *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Jesus was simply saying that life is unpredictably short, and all that matters is whether or not we're ready to meet our Maker! You need to get saved! Hebrews 9:27 states that we all have an appointment with death. Death is often sudden and we have no guarantee of tomorrow (Proverb 27:1). Are we any better than others, that we are immune to heartache and tragedy? No, not for one moment. Are you ready to die? Have you been born-again by the Spirit of God?

Charles Spurgeon Rightly Said: "Repentance is a grace... There are no conditions of salvation!"

I recall hearing of a tornado that ripped through a little Baptist church in Georgia, killing many of the members. Were they being judged by God? No, not at all. The earth is under a curse because of man's sin, and all men are susceptible to the woes of living in a fallen world. This is the curse that sin has brought upon the human race. Life is short. All that will matter 100 years from now is whether you

DIE IN THE LORD (Revelation 14:13), or you DIE IN YOUR SINS (John 8:24). Hopefully, you'll die in the Lord. 2nd Corinthians 6:2 states, "...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Only a fool would postpone getting saved.

The road to Hell is paved with good intentions and neon signs; the road to eternal life is plain and simple (Matthew 7:13-14). The road to Hell exalts religion; but the road to Heaven exalts Jesus. There are two types of religions in the world: DO and DONE. Either you believe that you must DO something to get into Heaven OR you are simply resting upon Jesus and His precious blood. DO or DONE, which are you? I'm in the DONE category! Jesus paid it all!

We are Not Saved by Repenting, We are Saved by Trusting Jesus!

God COMMANDS us to repent... "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). You "repent" by believing the Gospel. 2nd Thessalonians 1:8-9a, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction." It is heresy to teach repentance as a separate act from believing. I've heard many false preachers, such as Evangelist's Ray Comfort, David Cloud, Jack Chick and Paul Washer, teach that a person who believes the Gospel without repenting is not saved. My friend, it is impossible to believe the Gospel without repenting. If a man didn't repent, he would never come to Jesus Christ. John 3:20, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Repentance and faith are so closely related that the Bible simply tells us to "believe" to be saved. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Biblical repentance is the Greek word *metanoeo*, which simply means to change one's mind so as to compel that person to come to Jesus Christ for salvation. The reason why repentance is necessary for salvation is because without repentance no person would ever come to Christ to be saved. The man who believes has repented, which is why the words "believe" and "believed" are mentioned 85 times in the Gospel of John, but the word "repent" is not mentioned even once. The man who believes has repented, and the man who repents has believed. Repentance without faith is not genuine repentance; but rather, mere self reformation, which is what Judas experienced. Faith without repentance is mere optimism and religious devotion, not genuine salvation. To be saved, a person must realize that they are a guilty sinner in the eyes of God, and receive the Gospel of Christ's DEATH on the cross, BURIAL and RESURRECTION as full payment for their sins.

Ray Comfort and John MacArthur frequently lift [Pastor Charles Spurgeon's words](#) out of context, attempting to bolster up their straw-man of Lordship Salvation; but if you read the entire sermon, titled "REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE," you'll find the following quote (which you'll never hear from Mr. Comfort or Mr. MacArthur because it totally contradicts their teachings) . . .

"'Repentance' is a grace. Some people preach it as a condition of salvation.

Condition of nonsense! There are no conditions of salvation.”—Charles Spurgeon

SOURCE: <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0044.htm> (Charles Spurgeon, from a sermon titled, *REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE*, preached at the *New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, on Sept. 23, 1855*)

We are saved by believing the Gospel, not by repenting of our sins. Many preachers misunderstand repentance. If a person must turn away from sinful behavior, that is behavior modification, not the gift of God. We read in John 6:28-29 that the work of God is to “BELIEVE” on Jesus Christ. We read in 1st Corinthians 1:21 that it pleases God to “SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE.” We read in John 6:40 that the Father’s will is to “BELIEVE” on the Son. No mention is made of repenting! This doesn’t mean that repentance is not necessary to salvation; but rather, it simply means that the man who realizes he is a guilty sinner in God’s eyes and believes the Gospel is saved. Repentance and faith are inseparable. You don’t get on a plane and leave Michigan, and then secondly fly toward Hawaii. Rather, you are moving toward Hawaii and leaving Michigan at the same time. Likewise, the person who believes has also repented of their unbelief. The only prerequisite to be saved is to realize your need for the Savior because you are a sinner.

We are saved immediately by trusting Jesus Christ, but sanctification (discipleship) is a lifetime process. We are saved immediately by trusting Christ, but it takes a lifetime to become Christlike. Becoming Christlike is not required for salvation, but to simply trust Him. Eternal life is the free gift of God, paid for by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and His precious [blood sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat in the heavenly Holy Place](#).

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[REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS](#) (chapter 8 from Dr. Harry Ironside’s book, “[EXCEPT YE REPENT](#)”)

Jesus is Precious!



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